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S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE THE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE,
MAY XXIX, MDCCLXXV.

BY
JOHN MAINWARING, B.D.
FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE.

C A M B R I D G E,

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MDCCLXXV.

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UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

MAY XIX MDCLXXV

JOHN ALAN WATKINS, D.D.

C A M B R I D G E

WID. 1

TO THE
REV. WILLIAM MASON, M.A.

DEAR SIR,

WHEN I asked your permission to dedicate to You the following Discourse, the reasons for my request were much the same, as are usual on such occasions; — some partiality for my own production, and a strong desire of making known to the world the friendship between us, of so long a standing, and so honourable to me. There are other reasons, however, which, as they do not relate to ourselves only, may be mentioned, perhaps, with a better grace.

The principles, which chiefly prevail in the Sermon, are such as You have always approved and professed. If indeed they were not, I should have made an unpardonable mistake in my choice of a Patron. But the choice is too well justified! For, (sorry I am to say it!) those principles, though their value will ever be the same, do now stand in need
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of support: and, unless they are countenanced by men of worth and eminence, cannot long preserve their authority. It is true, Sir, You are not in a public station, and have given a proof that You do not wish to be in one. But the attention of the Public You have commanded by your Writings; and it will naturally pass from them to your private opinions and sentiments. You will not, I am sure, suspect me of flattery, — not even in a Dedication. If the world should, I will be bold to tell it, That whatever YOU shall say, or think, on any serious subject, is of some consequence. Let not then your delicacy hinder You from exerting your talents in reforming the manners, and correcting the taste, of the age You live in. I earnestly wish, for the good of mankind, that your life may be long and happy, and am, with a perfect esteem,

Dear Sir,

Your obliged and affectionate Servant,

J. MAINWARING.

P S A L. lxxxv. i.

LORD, THOU HAST BECOME GRACIOUS UNTO THY LAND;
THOU HAST TURNED AWAY THE CAPTIVITY OF JACOB.

POLITICS is not the province of the Clergy, as such; yet, as members of the state, they are concerned in the success of government, and a part of their order in the *business* of it: as belonging to the republic of letters, they have a further right to be consulted, and may, with great propriety, both exercise and declare their judgment on any question of public concern. Indeed, by appointing such Anniversaries as the present, the state supposes this right, and calls upon them to exert it. But it would degrade their character, and dishonour their profession, if ever in their writings or behaviour, there should appear the least bias in favour of a party. May their best talents be always employed, as they often have been, to correct those prejudices, which are hostile to peace! May their conduct convince mankind, that the divine feelings of benevolence, and the sacred obligations of justice, are of more consequence to every one, than any *interest* can be; — of much more value, than any *fancy* or *opinion*.

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But, to deal ingenuously, *all* the mischief of public dissensions is not to be imputed to the people, or their governors. The nature of man is too faulty, to be charged with more evil, than really belongs to it. Our civil constitution, from the natural opposition between the members of which it is composed, contains in it the seeds of continual discord: and our sacred system, though excellent, like the other, on the whole, never pretended to be free from faults; or to have attained the *utmost* perfection, which even *human* ordinances may possibly admit. Both will have faults sufficient, in the best of times, to exercise the controversial, and reforming spirit;—a spirit, which, when inspired by charity, and directed by good-sense, does the office of a Prophet, or an Apostle! Though not fond of detecting abuses, or exposing the authors, no tenderness for established systems, no fear of disturbing settlements, can restrain it, when the rights of nature are plainly violated, and oppression is avowed. It will kindle the coldest disposition, and animate the dullest with all the ardors of enthusiasm. This principle, indeed, has been so disgraced by visionaries, that men of sense, when they feel its divine energy, are afraid to acknowledge it. Yet this alone gives success to many of their noblest undertakings, by seizing those happy conjunctures, and improving those critical moments, which, when once lost, are never to be retrieved. What a pity such a generous principle should often be excited for wrong purposes, and sometimes commit the greatest excesses, even while it executes the decrees of reason and justice!

The enthusiasts of the last age laid their quarrel with the established system to two causes, —the irregularities committed in one part; and the conformity which the other still bore

bore to the Romish institutions. Strong antipathies are frequently the effect of extravagant notions. They looked upon *monarchy*, however mixed and modified, as the devoted instrument of that Anti-Christian Power, they had so lately abjured; and *Prelacy*, as its peculiar appendage. They fancied, that so long as the proud pageantry of its titles and dignities was suffered to subsist, the *doctrines* of Rome were exploded in vain. For though Christian societies could neither be ruled nor maintained without *subordinations*; yet such *extreme pre-eminence* was wholly repugnant to the idea of a *Pastor*, as well as to that spirit, which the Gospel breathes throughout; and had ever been found to take more worth from the character, than it adds weight to the office; — that, in short, unless the administration, both sacred and civil, was totally altered, it would soon be again entirely the same. Suppose it would: what right had *they* to alter it? — Their *pretence* was, Conscience and the Scriptures, both which they bent to their own inclinations; and made use of to justify not their opinions only, but their acts of violence, their uncharitable censures, the rage of reforming, and rude contempt of lawful authority. Now, although the rule of “Obedience to the higher powers, as ordained of God,” is not absolute, or without exceptions; yet it is so clearly expressed, and strongly inculcated, that a serious inquirer would be much apter to err from a too strict adherence to it, than by departing from it on insufficient grounds. So difficult it is to understand the principles, or account for the conduct of those enthusiasts! Or, shall we suppose they were all hypocrites, and destitute of principle? We know too little of what passes in the human breast, to warrant us in such conclusions. Such severity equally misbecomes us in judging of

either party. Happy *they*, who in troublesome times, and trying situations, commit the fewest mistakes; consider well before they engage, and at all events fulfil their engagements! Among the favourers of prerogative, many might imagine, that resistance was not lawful in any case whatever; or, if in some cases they believed it necessary, might still be in doubt, what degree of oppression or danger would justify such extremities. And even among the most deluded zealots on the side of liberty, many perhaps were impelled by a sense of duty. It is true, in that fanatic age, the best of these would carry but an ill appearance; while there was such a general resemblance of manners, as almost confounded characters; while persons of the most opposite qualities adopted the same unrelenting, impracticable austerity; the same sour, and sullen solemnity; the same scenical aspect, action, and language; equally fond of applying Scripture passages to the common occurrences of the day; and of bringing religion and faith into all questions.

The enmity which the Puritans bore to monarchy, and the share they had in destroying it, may in part account for the total change of sentiments at the Restoration. An affected sanctity, in itself very despicable, is the more to be detested, for the scorn and ridicule, to which it exposes true piety. So, among the very worst consequences of a factious opposition to government, is the advantage it gives to a bad ministry, and the writers in its pay; who deride all notions of liberty, the moment they see it abused, and bring into question the very being of patriotism and public-spirit. Though there never was, at any period, more occasion for these virtues, than at that we are now considering; the base counterfeits which ran current in the former reign, had so disgraced

disgraced every good quality, that the few who really possessed, were almost compelled to conceal them. The sense too of the late troubles was yet so strong and painful, that opposition even to the worst of measures was considered as criminal. It required time to recover from the effect of prejudices so very natural: but time has shewn the folly and danger of such inconsistencies; has conquered prejudices, and corrected errors, which in their first impressions were almost irresistible. The more secret causes of the public disorders were clearly seen, when the passions which produced them had subsided; and the true interests of the nation are better understood in consequence of those changes, which have since taken place. It is *our* part to point out the true uses of this information; and to inculcate those old lessons of caution and wisdom, which the negligence of mankind will always need; — lessons, for the sake of which this Day's Solemnity was at first instituted, and is still observed. In some respects, the ends of it may seem to have been better answered, at a period nearer to its institution. While the remembrance of those passages which preceded it, was yet fresh in the minds of men, it was easier to excite attention, and to produce impressions strong and durable. This, indeed, like other useful appointments, was subject to misapplication. But, if the endeavour to keep up invidious distinctions, was mean and base; if it was barbarous to revive and perpetuate expiring animosities: if even good princes may be spoiled by flattery; if those of a contrary character would not be reformed by coarse invective; — these are inconveniences no longer incident to the annual Observation of a Day, which, to a *grateful* people, must always yield matter of devout reflection;

flection; and to *considerate* princes, is full of instruction. It may serve to awaken in both;

An humble and deep sense of the errors to which they are liable, and of their equal subjection to the supreme Ruler.

Of that particular homage which they owe him for the greater and more signal manifestations of his mercy: And

Of the obligations they are under, to promote, by every private and public encouragement, the interests of religion, morality, and learning.

First, these occasions invite both princes and subjects to reflect on the nature of their respective engagements, and the danger, as well as guilt of deviating from them. As power, founded on manifest injustice, or seized by violence, is seldom lasting; all men detesting usurpation, — even those, who, from regard to their interest or safety, may support it for a time: so, it should not be forgot, that every undue extension of *legal* authority leads to the same issue. When that power, which was incontestible as to its origin, exceeded the limits, within which it ought to have rested; it was seen how one instance of encroachment introduced another, until all the fences of liberty were thrown down. And when the people, in the heat of their resentment, had withdrawn that respect and reverence which are due to governors; a bold and turbulent spirit pushed them on to successive violations of duty, till all sense of allegiance was extinguished; and with it, all hopes of a reconciliation. For, though a little more sincerity on one side, and some moderation on the other, might have saved the state; the several treaties entered into for this purpose, ended only in forced concessions, and exorbitant demands. Posterity, which sees with equal admiration,
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the merits of the suffering prince, and of many who warmly opposed him; sees too those faults in both, which some writers have unwisely defended, and others have too much exaggerated. Which of the contending parties committed the greatest breaches on the constitution, it is difficult to determine; or whether the increasing power of the crown; if left to its own course, would not have proved a more lasting mischief than all the excesses of popular fury. Such passages remind both prince and people of the nicety in preserving the political balance; and the extreme difficulty of restoring it when once it is lost. In the last place, when they recollect, how often in the history of almost every kingdom the regular order of succession has been interrupted; and by what a variety of errors states and their rulers may bring on such disasters; both will beware of that confidence, which mere power is apt to inspire, but no prudence in the use of it can justify: both alike will acknowledge their dependance on the sovereign Ruler. If he no longer interposes immediately and visibly, as under the Jewish, and in the early periods of the Christian dispensation; yet the world is equally under his government, whatever be the mode of his acting; the minds of men, though free, to every virtuous purpose, are still subject to his controuling influence: the issues of things, how fixed, or uncertain soever, in their own nature, are all within his view, and all at his command; from the smallest accident, that affects the meanest individual, to those grand revolutions, that involve the fates of kingdoms and their governors.

Secondly, That particular homage, which is due to God for the greater and more signal manifestations of his mercy, is so plain a duty, that public thanksgiving has always made

a principal part in every system of religion, whether instituted by divine command, or suggested by natural reason, or derived from general tradition. Indeed, if the least of the divine favours, the common and constant benefits every one receives, is a sufficient foundation for gratitude; those which concern whole communities of men, must demand their united and solemn acknowledgments. But *we* of *this* nation have peculiar reasons for joining in such acts of praise, arising from our singular situation and destiny. For where shall we find a nation, either now subsisting, or recorded in the pages of history, which has tried so great a variety of striking vicissitudes, and not perished in the trial?

Every one knows the vast changes it underwent in the earliest times, compelled to submit by turns to the Roman, Saxon, and Norman dominion: — how it was afterwards harassed by the fierce contests between the Barons during the reigns of several successive princes: and, when those were ended, — what new commotions arose concerning the title to the crown, which rendered this country one uniform scene of desolation till the union of the two Houses under Henry the VIIth. In the next reign; the desperate dissensions respecting religion, after many hazardous struggles, ended indeed in the overthrow of the Papal superstition: but the nation, instead of uniting in the rational, consistent scheme of public worship, so wisely adopted, broke into sects, that warred with each other, and ran through all the forms of fanaticism. One of those sects, more rigid than the rest, had strength enough to overturn the government of the Church under a pretence of reforming its discipline. Nor was the mischief confined to the Church alone. For, as a balance to the popular maxims that sect maintained, the two
first

first princes of the Stuart race introduced opinions, which, if admitted, would render them and their successors despotic. By these, and other proceedings alike indiscrete and irregular, they augmented the general dissatisfaction, till it discharged itself in the great crisis and convulsion of the state, which followed. During the twelve years Usurpation, the whole system of foreign affairs was conducted with such wisdom and spirit, that all Europe looked up to England with admiration and awe. But the people, however martial by nature and habit, were soon weary of a military government. They felt the curse of that *Protection*, under which there was no security: and the calamity of that *Deliverance*, which sanctified every species of oppression. From a love too of justice, for its *own* sake, natural to all, and not to be conquered till men are deeply corrupted; the return of the rightful heir was universally wished; no one doubting, but the same happy event, which restored regularity and order to the kingdom, would make a due impression on the mind of the king. It is indeed surprising, that, educated in the school of Adversity, and endowed besides with a good understanding, he should have derived *no* benefit either from his own experience, or the recent effects of his father's errors. But it is quite natural, that one, whose only serious pursuit was pleasure, and whose licentiousness in pursuing it made majesty contemptible, should shun the controul of faithful ministers, and select the most unfit, to advise and govern him. While such men as Southampton and Clarendon were his *Keepers*, there were some lucid intervals in the madness of his policy; which, had he lived a little longer, would have forced things back into their former channel, and have ended in the ruin of himself, or his kingdoms. The very circumstance, which

Successor

seemed to threaten the greatest mischief, was the chief security; — that habit of profusion, which left no room for other, and more pernicious applications of the public treasure. The precipitate, undisguised bigotry of his son, produced the *Revolution*; — an event by far the most important in the course of our history, yet compassed at once, not only without bloodshed, but without even the least breath of discord; — in a *manner* indeed, if not really miraculous, yet not to be imputed to any *known* causes, or paralleled in any *other* history, or explained from the intervention of any *human* art or contrivance. The rights of the people, so often invaded, and so often recovered; were from this time firmly established: their interests were steadily pursued: but, by some strange fatality on both sides, neither experienced that satisfaction, which so rare a blessing seems to imply. The heroic prince, who had lately rescued, and now governed, them by their own desire, had no part in their affections! He had, indeed, but *one* method of engaging them. But his wise and virtuous conduct was not sufficient! His meritorious services were requited by ill humours! his generous designs misconstrued, and obstructed! This behaviour, inexcusable as it was, and unaccountable as it seems, might perhaps be owing, partly to the strong influence of family-attachments even in cases, where they ought to have no existence; and partly to that restless temper, which renders men insensible of their own happiness, and hard to be satisfied under any government.

The following reign was marked by great popularity, and still greater prosperity; 'till, at the close of it, the faith of treaties violated by the peace, the fruits of the war sacrificed, and the succession itself endangered, all indicated the true spirit of that faction, by which the great councils of the nation

tion were then directed. The subsequent efforts and fates of that party are yet fresh in the minds of men; and the remembrance of them tends to the same point as every other part of this short review; — to shew us the particular obligations we are under, as a people, to piety and gratitude. For many of those evils, which to all appearance, must have proved fatal to our establishment, have, through the secret direction of some controuling destiny, contributed in the end to its greater security; — that unseen, gracious Power, which has watched over it at all times; has conducted it through dangers both foreign and domestic; has shielded it from the blows of fortune, the plots of its enemies, and the errors of its friends; often converting those very *means* the wicked had employed for the attainment of their private ends, to the public advantage, and general welfare; as often rendering those very *men* the instruments of conveying to the kingdom such blessings, as were farthest from their thoughts, and most contrary to their intentions.

When to such memorable instances of God's goodness to this nation in its earliest periods, we add those it has experienced in every subsequent stage of its advancement: when we also contemplate the curious connexion between the public blessings we at present enjoy, and the conduct of that prince, whose return we celebrate; — what a multitude of reflexions crowd upon us, all enforcing the devout observance of this Day's Solemnity!

But the uses of it are, not only to remind princes of their dependent state, and of the homage which they owe the supreme Ruler for the more public and peculiar proofs of his protection. It also sets before them the method of improving the *natural* means of national happiness, by adopting an enlarged and generous policy: by renouncing the false arts,

and steadily pursuing the true ends, of government. Now, this supposes a constant attention to religion, learning, and morals in the conduct of states.

Religion is intitled to that attention, as a rule of behaviour both to princes and subjects; for its beneficial influence in civil society; for the additional sanction it gives to human institutions; and the power it has to prevent or restrain many crimes and disorders, which laws cannot reach. But whoever considers only the *political* evils, which flow from the wrong direction of this powerful principle, must perceive the importance and value of *learning*. That *piety*, which is founded on just conceptions of the divine nature, and of the duties arising from the relations in which man is placed, will not lose itself in superstition or fanaticism. That *faith*, which is strengthened by a clear insight into the various, concurring proofs of its great articles, will not be shaken by groundless objections, or shrink in the hour of trial. And again, in proportion as the true principles of *policy* are better explained and established, it will be easier to prevent the designs of sedition on one hand, or of usurpation on the other. The general tranquility will be less subject to interruption from those party-disputes, in the noise and clamour of which, the true interests of the nation are lost and confounded. In short, if it is of consequence, that the public affairs should be conducted with skill; that the dangerous tendency of measures or opinions should be detected and defeated; that the respective claims both of sovereign and subject should be distinguished and preserved; it is evident, how intimately the welfare of government is connected with *letters*. Our ancestors were so sensible of this, that after the decisive victory obtained over the Romish Church, their first care was to found such nurseries of science, as might prevent the return,
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and extirpate the remains, of that gross ignorance, which was its chief support. Their great object was, to fix the Reformed faith in the heads and hearts of a brave and enlightened people; that, for the future, it might not be left to depend for its existence, on the discretion of princes, or the humour of a party.

But as government cannot prosper without an equal administration of law and justice; so neither can learning flourish, if the rewards of it are ignorantly, or unfaithfully dispensed. Though some few persons of a high spirit, and superior talents may be unhurt, or even animated by such discouragements; the general effect of them will ever be the same: their chilling influence will destroy the delicate blossoms of genius, and be felt, like a blight or blast, through all the regions of science!

It is true, under the wisest management of *favour*, there must always be just occasion for *some* complaints, and many complainers without reason. But the partiality, the negligence, the caprice, so common in those, who are entrusted with the power of rewarding, are a serious evil. While, on one hand, they extinguish the generous ardour of excelling, they drive men, on the other, to every baser art of pleasing. A late Grandee, who, from having exhausted the vast sources of his own, became the sole channel of his sovereign's munificence, was aware of this charge against *Patrons*; and tacitly pleaded their excuse, by declaring in a circle of his learned friends, that "he would pay as much regard to merit, as the *times* would permit." But, do the times claim this compliance, because they are bad? or, is their badness owing to the compliance of those, who ought to reform them? — The declaration however, if rightly understood, was very sincere. As much regard should be paid to merit, as was consistent

sistent with the *settled* plan of governing by *influence*: — a plan, indeed, which proves to the world the perfidy of those who pursue it, yet has always been pursued with the same fatal efficacy; and always defended on the same frivolous pretences; though every impartial person will acknowledge, that, if virtue and learning were out of the question, it is contrary to every principle of sound policy.

Having already shewn, how much it is the interest of states to protect religion, and encourage learning, I now proceed to the last article, the care of the public morals.

In the smaller states, it is easy both to guard against excesses, and to correct them before they are converted into habit. In the larger, the case is very different. The people are generally made worse than they would be either by the nature of the government itself, or by the manner in which it is conducted: and when the very power, which should prevent the mischief, is the cause of its increase, the remedy may well be difficult. Still, every wise state will have an eye to those vices, which are the growth of its own soil; and if the cause cannot wholly be removed, will consider how to break the force, and lessen the effect of them. How well soever any government may be constituted, to what grandeur soever it may have risen, it is already on the point of its declension, if the people are possessed by a mercenary spirit: An appearance, the more alarming in a system compounded like ours, because corruption is the peculiar defect of such a system, as oppression is of the simpler, and more arbitrary forms; and because since the firm settlement of it, the dangers from this quarter have both increased and multiplied. It is true, that, to guard against them, many prudent provisions have been made, and some of a recent date, much to the honour of those who proposed them. But most of the laws devised for this purpose,
have

have hitherto been eluded, and probably will be, while so many in the upper ranks, through imaginary wants, which fashion has created; and so many in the lower, through the real difficulties of living, are reduced to a state of dependance that is almost servile. The secret operation, and unperceived progress of such causes, are more to be dreaded, than any *formed* designs of any prince or minister; or than all the powers of Europe, if combined against us. Indeed, unless heaven, in its pity, shall infuse into this people a spirit of integrity, some way proportioned to the means that may now be employed to corrupt them; doubly guarded as the constitution is by their innate bravery, and by the firm barriers of law, there will need neither fraud nor force to compleat its destruction! But we trust, that God will defend this country for the sake of that truth, which yet prevails, and of the faithful few, who yet support it; that their example will have *some* influence even in this age of licence; that their prayers, prompted by the Holy Spirit, and presented by the Redeemer, will silence Justice at the throne of Grace.

If we examine our conduct towards other nations, how faulty soever it might be in former times through the prevalence of party, or perverse policy; we trust it has long been clear of reproach; — that neither our enemies, nor our confederates can justly charge us with any insult, injury, or oppression; any want of good faith, moderation, or humanity; that our great prosperity hath not made us insolent, nor our great power fond of engaging in wars; — often undertaken, full of horrors as they are! on no better grounds, than humour or avarice, ambition or vanity.

Happy people! could we survey our domestic character with as much satisfaction. And *some* parts of it perhaps we may. For, notwithstanding the many public instances of a
bold

bold disregard to religion and the laws; notwithstanding the venality and prostitution so common in the lower ranks; the avowed and shameless libertinism, so justly lamented in the higher; — *one* consolation still remains, — that the *fountains* of religion and law are not stopped, or corrupted; but continue to flow with a current, strong and pure as ever. Until this security fails, we may venture to hope, against the doleful and confident predictions of its ruin, that the duration of our government will be equal to its excellence. The badness of our case, were it even what fancy and fear represent it, would be no reason to despair; though indeed, were it less alarming than in truth it is, a strong motive to reform: lest God, for our sins, should forsake this *land*, to which he hath been so highly *gracious*; and, for our enormous abuses of freedom, consign us over to perpetual *captivity*.



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